

# Celebrate Healthy Vision Month by Scheduling an Eye Exam

NEW CASTLE (May 9, 2017) – When it comes to overall health, patients regularly visit a primary care physician or pediatrician. Regular eye exams are just as important to protect sight and screen for eye disorders and other diseases.

According to Prevent Blindness, both the prevalence and cost of vision problems are set to grow at an alarming rate as the baby-boomer population ages, the number of people in the oldest age groups increases and the minority populations grow.

During Healthy Vision Month, observed each May, the National Eye Institute reminds the public to prioritize eye health to preserve vision. The organization suggests:

- Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam. This is crucial for individuals at high risk or with a family history of eye disease.
- Know your family health history.
- Live a healthy lifestyle.
- Use protective eye wear when playing contact sports, at work or during hobbies.
- Wear sunglasses.

The American Optometric Association suggests adults ages 18 to 60 have eye exams every two years and those at higher risk have eye exams every one to two years. Adults 61 and older should have their eyes examined annually or as recommended.

The Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children recommends pediatric eye health and vision screening for newborns at birth, and within the first month for high-risk newborns, including premature infants and those with a family history of

eye disease. The hospital also recommends eye health and vision screening at 1 and at 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  years old. At age 5, children should have eye alignment and vision screening. After age 5, children should have routine vision screenings every one to two years.

“Vision is important to children’s physical, cognitive and social development,” said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Services and a board-certified family physician. “A child’s learning and development can be affected by undiagnosed and/or uncorrected vision problems. Early detection and treatment are critical.”

In recognition of Healthy Vision Month, Elisha Jenkins, Director of DHSS’ Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI), has announced several events:

- May 10: Eye Health Summit at the Newark Free Library, 750 Library Ave., Newark, 10:15 a.m.
- May 17: Healthy Vision Family Night at the Delaware Children’s Museum, 50 Justison St., Wilmington, 5 p.m.
- May 18: Healthy Vision Month Smart Glasses Demonstration, 1 p.m. Registration is required. Call 302-255-9800 to register.

For information on any of these events, call the Division for the Visually Impaired at 302-255-9800.

For free information on vision and eye health, call Prevent Blindness at 800-331-2020 or [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).

The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of life of Delaware’s citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.